

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 416

INFO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

USCINCSO

USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 0982

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

USIA FOR IPS/ILA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, ES, HO

SUBJECT: HONDURAN-SALVADORAN CHIEFS OF STATE MEETING IN EL POY

REF: (A) TEGUCIGALPA 0991, (B) SAN SALVADOR 0980

1. THE LOCAL PRESS GAVE PROMINENT TREATMENT (REFTEL B) TO THE FEBRUARY 23 MEETING ON THE BORDER BETWEEN PRESIDENTS MOLINA AND MELGAR. ALTHOUGH THE HEADLINES AND ACCOMPANYING FRONTPAGE PHOTOS TENDED TO EMPHASIZE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THIS MEETING BODES WELL FOR A PROMPT RESOLUTION OF ALL OUTSTANDING BILATERAL PROBLEMS, THE ACCOMPANYING TEXTS CONTAINED LITTLE BEYOND: A DESCRIPTION OF WHO TOOK PART (THE PRESIDENTS, FOREIGN MINISTERS, CHIEFS-OF-STAFF, AND CONSIDERABLE NUMBERS OF UNDERLINGS); THE CONVIVIALITY AND OPENNESS OF THE GET-TOGETHER; AND A BRIEF OUTLINE OF AN ACTION PLAN FOR FUTURE PROGRESS.

2. THE SCENARIO CALLS FOR THE RESPECTIVE FOREIGN MINISTERS TO
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GET TOGETHER AND "QUICKLY" PRODUCE VIABLE ALTERNATIVES FOR

PRESENTATION TO THEIR PRESIDENTS. THE LATTER WOULD THEN MAKE THE CRUCIAL POLITICAL DECISIONS NECESSARY TO RESOLVE THE ISSUES. THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME THE HEADS-OF-STATE HAVE PROPOSED SUCH A COURSE OF ACTION.

3. SINCE FONMIN BORGONOVO WENT DIRECTLY FROM EL POY TO THE FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING IN SAN JOSE, WE WILL HAVE TO AWAIT HIS RETURN FOR A FIRST-HAND DESCRIPTION OF THE MEETING.

4. TODAY'S PAPERS CARRIED A RELATED EL POY STORY. APPARENTLY SOME 23 HONDURAN TRUCKS LOADED WITH BANANAS CROSSED THE FRONTIER AT EL POY ON ROUTE, DIRECTLY AS OPPOSED TO TRANSITTING GUATEMALA, TO THE SAN SALVADOR CENTRAL PRODUCE MARKET. SINCE THE FEBRUARY EARTHQUAKE, FRESH PRODUCE FROM GUATEMALA HAS VIRTUALLY STOPPED COMING INTO EL SALVADOR LEADING TO A SHORTAGE OF ALMOST ALL FRUITS AND VEGETABLES, AS WELL AS SKY-ROCKETING PRICES. THE HONDURAN TRUCKS WERE REPORTEDLY GREETED WITH GREAT ENTHUSIASM BY THEIR SALVADORAN COLLEAGUES.

5. COMMENT: WE ARE STRUCK BY THE TIMING OF THIS RATHER UNEXPECTED CHIEFS OF STATE MEETING OUR FIRST IMPRESSION IS THAT BOTH GOVERNMENTS FELT IT WOULD BE IN THEIR INTERESTS TO HEAD OFF POSSIBLE CLAIMS THAT THE SAN JOSE MEETING MIGHT PRODUCE COLLECTIVE "OUTSIDE PRESSURES" ON THE TWO PRINCIPALS TO SETTLE THE LONG STANDING DISPUTE. THE LAST MONTH HAS SHOWN BOTH SIDES ARE EXTREMELY SENSITIVE TO SUCH ACCUSATIONS. THIS MEETING COULD HAVE BEEN AN ATTEMPT TO PREEMPT THE FIELD BY DOING THEIR OWN THING FIRST.
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